



Community Development & Neighborhood Services

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


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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 14, 2024

TO: Mayor Arndt and City Councilmembers

THRU: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager 
Tyler Marr, Deputy City Manager 
Caryn Champine, Director, Planning, Development & Transportation 

FROM: JC Ward, Neighborhood Programs Manager, Neighborhood Services
Leo Escalante, Neighborhood Liaison, Neighborhood Services

RE: Immigration Legal Fund Report 2021-2023

This memo provides City Councilmembers with an update on activities performed and opportunities identified as part of the implementation of the City's Immigration Legal Fund for the period of October 2021 to December 2023.

Executive Summary

The City of Fort Collins launched the Immigration Legal Fund (ILF) in October 2021 with a vision to address the urgent legal needs of its immigrant population. As a pioneering initiative, the ILF was designed to provide comprehensive, wraparound legal services to the immigrant community in Fort Collins. This report assesses the ILF's performance from its inception through December 31, 2023, highlighting its achievements, challenges, and areas for future development.

The ILF aimed to achieve three primary objectives: provide urgent and holistic immigration legal services, reach a broad segment of the immigrant community, and foster trust within this community. Operationalized through a collaborative framework, the ILF partnered with three grant recipients: Alianza NORCO, Interfaith Solidarity and Accompaniment Coalition ("ISAAC"), and Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network ("RMIAN"). These organizations were selected for their expertise in immigration legal services, their established trust within the immigrant communities of Fort Collins, and the complementarity nature of their service delivery model.

With a budget of \$400,000 (combined total for both the pilot and post-pilot phases), the ILF successfully handled 262 immigration cases, nearly doubling the value of services provided to \$766,900. This surpassed the initial case projection by 330% by the end of 2023, with an 87% increase in asylum cases following the removal of the 12-month residency requirement. The program supported individuals from 32 countries, including those from vulnerable groups such as juveniles, victims of crime and human trafficking, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, underscoring its commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

Key recommendations from the pilot phase included eliminating the residency requirement to further increase accessibility, standardizing reporting methods to streamline operations, enhancing collaboration with local organizations, exploring diverse funding sources to ensure sustainability, and offering more comprehensive training for volunteer attorneys. Several of these improvements have already been implemented in 2023.

As the program is funded through December 2024, it faces challenges such as the need for increased local legal representation and the need to adapt to evolving federal immigration

policies. The ILF is a model of engagement with historically underserved populations resulting in collaborative, community-driven initiatives.

Immigration Legal Fund Overview

The City of Fort Collins Immigration Legal Fund (“ILF”) was approved by City Council in 2021 to provide funds to community organizations and legal service providers to offer immigrant community members in Fort Collins wraparound, holistic immigration services to meet the most urgent needs, reach the greatest number of impacted community members, and build trust in the community. See *Appendix A* for additional background information. Initially approved as an 18-month pilot beginning in Q4 2021, the ILF received continued funding for services in 2023 and 2024 through the City’s budget process.

Funding was awarded through a competitive grant review process that prioritized awards to nonprofit organizations with long track records of serving and building trust with the local immigrant community. Three grant recipients have been providing ILF services since 2021 - Alianza NORCO, Interfaith Solidarity and Accompaniment Coalition (“ISAAC”), and Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network (“RMIAN”).

Over the course of the Immigration Legal Fund to date (Oct. 2021-Dec. 2023), the City’s investment:

- Assisted Fort Collins residents in **262 immigration cases**
- Provided **legal services valued at \$766,900** (pro bono rates) for a \$400,000 program cost
- **Outperformed projected case numbers by 330%** through 2023
- Saw an **87% increase in asylum** cases after removing the 12-month residency restriction
- Demonstrated the **high need for legal services for victims** of crime, human trafficking, violence against women, abuse or neglect, and threat of death or torture with 30% of total services from these case types (78 cases)
- Served **61 juveniles** ages 3 months to 18 years (23% of all cases)
- Represented at least **74 clients with intersectional vulnerabilities** including unaccompanied minors, single parents, disabled residents, and LGBTQIA+ community members
- Aided clients from **32 countries**, including 6 who were born in the United States
- Served many long-term residents with **20% of clients living in Fort Collins for 20 years or more**

Immigration Legal Fund Pilot Program – Case Data 2021-2022

To address the unmet need of legal representation in immigration cases and educational programming to raise awareness of available options to attain citizenship or lawful presence, the Immigration Legal Fund pilot program was established by the City of Fort Collins. The ILF was approved for an 18-month pilot program to grant funds to nonprofit organizations and legal service providers to offer holistic immigration legal services for Fort Collins residents.

The pilot program received a \$150,000 midcycle appropriation from the City of Fort Collins and three nonprofit organizations were chosen as grant recipients, each receiving \$50,000. The organizations selected by the City’s grant review team included Alianza NORCO, ISAAC, and RMIAN. A profile of each of the grant recipients and their delivery models are included in the following section. The pilot program’s funding and services wrapped up in December 2022. The program outperformed all projected metrics during the pilot period and was proposed for continued funding through the City’s regular budget process.

Case types tracked and their definitions are included in Table 1.

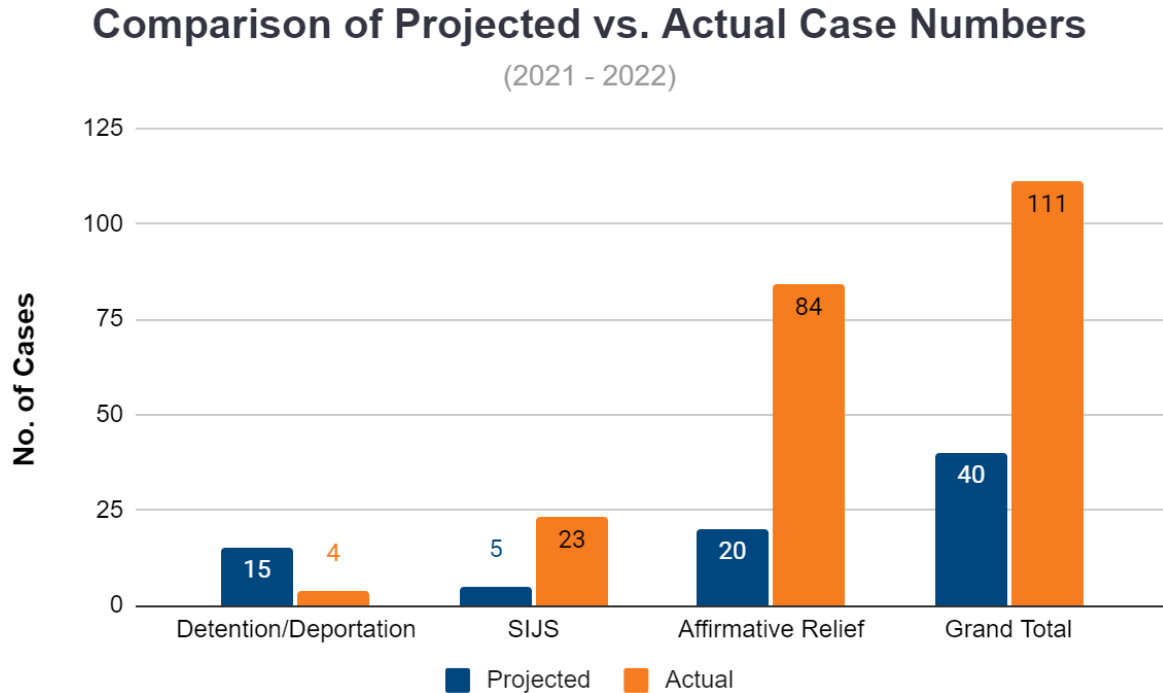
Table 1 – Case Types and Definitions

Case Type and Abbreviation	Definition of Case Type
U Visa	Temporary visa for victims of violent crime
Asylum	Permanent lawful presence for victims of persecution or fear of harm or death upon return to home country
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)	Temporary status for abused, neglected, or abandoned children that allows the client to apply for permanent Lawful Permanent Resident status
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	Temporary status for youth who arrived in the U.S. during a specified time period
Violence Against Women Act Visa (VAWA)	Temporary status for victims of domestic violence or crimes outlined in the Violence Against Women Act that allows the client to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident status
T Visa/Office of Trafficking In Persons (OTIP)	Four-year visa for victims of human trafficking that allows certain clients to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident status
Lawful Permanent Resident Status (LPR)	Permanent authorization to live in the United States as a non-citizen (sometimes known as “green card” residents)
Removal Cancellation	Status adjustment by an immigration judge from ‘subject to deportation’ to ‘lawful admittance for permanent residence’ under certain circumstances
Work Authorization	Approval to work in the U.S. based on eligibility, available to a variety of visa and status designations
Detention/Deportation	Cases for clients being held in immigration detention facilities, on bond/monitoring, or otherwise facing deportation (removal) proceedings; clients under the ILF must have and assert their right to lawful presence in legal arguments to the immigration court
Adjustment of Status	Process to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident status or to move from one category of visa to another

Figure 1 compares the projected number of cases against actual cases in the three main case categories.

Actual numbers exceeded the projections in the categories of "SIJS" and "Affirmative Relief", while in "Detention/Deportation" the actual number was below the projection. Tracking case types during the pilot program indicated that some cases could be classified as Detention/Deportation as well as another case type because the outcome of that case could result in deportation. Service providers were also unclear if “detention/deportation” cases included those of clients with ankle monitors or out on bond. The overall actual total of all cases significantly exceeded the projected total.

Figure 1 - Comparison of Projected vs Actual Case Numbers During the Pilot Program

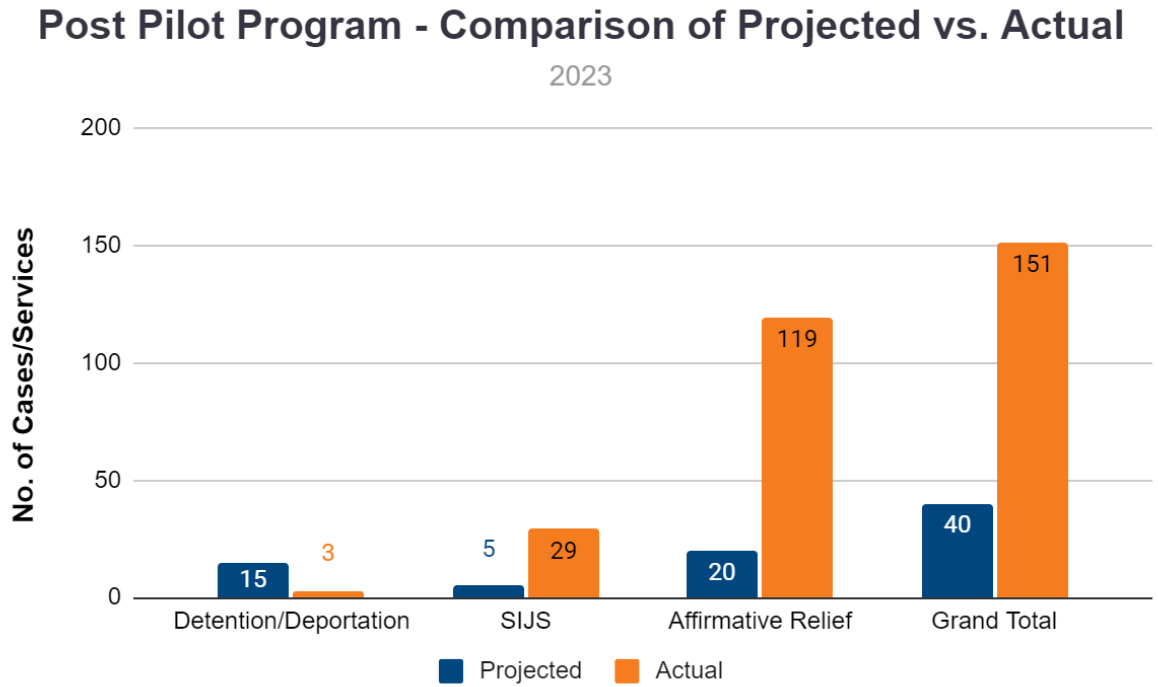


Immigration Legal Fund Post-Pilot – Case Data 2023-2024

The Immigration Legal Fund received a Council appropriation as part of the budgeting for outcomes process for \$250,000 annually for implementation years 2023 and 2024. Service provider grant recipients were again determined through a competitive, open application process and Alianza NORCO, ISAAC, and RMIAN were selected to continue their work in this space under the ILF. Cumulative and year-over-year comparative program performance are detailed in the “outcomes” sections below.

Using the initial case number projections, Figure 2 shows that the Immigration legal Fund program continued to exceed initial projections throughout 2023, after the pilot period had ended. The actual numbers were much higher than projected in the "SIJS" and "Affirmative Relief" categories, while for "Detention/Deportation" the actual number was once again less than projected. Consistent with pilot program metrics, the overall actual case totals continue to be greater than projected totals.

Figure 2 -Post Pilot-Program - Comparison of Projected vs. Actual

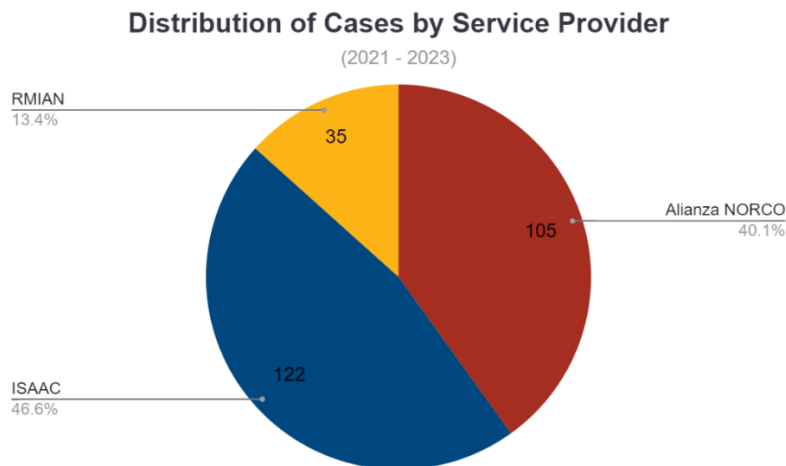


Overview of ILF Grant Recipients/Service Providers

Grant recipients chosen for the Immigration Legal Fund were those with an ability to increase capacity and help create an infrastructure of services including legal clinics, “Ask A Lawyer” advice sessions, and representation. Each organization has a different service delivery model, resulting in a complementary suite of services and referrals.

Figure 3 shows the percentage and number of cases handled by the service providers throughout the 18-month pilot period and 2023. It’s important to note that the number of cases handled by the service providers was mainly the result of their respective service delivery models.

Figure 3- Distribution of Cases by Service Provider



The following section gives an overview of these organizations and provides their mission,

services, target populations, and respective logic models.

Alianza NORCO

Alianza NORCO is a nonprofit organization established in 2017 by Mexican and Salvadoran immigrant women and their allies. Their mission is: “To Strengthen and empower the immigrant community and their families through key services, civic education, leadership development, and community organizing.”¹

Alianza NORCO’s services include family preparedness workshops, Know Your Rights trainings, and citizenship information nights. Prior to the ILF pilot program, Alianza NORCO did not offer direct legal representation. Instead, they provided legal referrals and partnered with legal service providers to host immigrant support-related workshops while simultaneously building their Legal Services Program.

Service Delivery

Funding received through the Immigration Legal Fund pilot program as well as other funding sources, allowed Alianza NORCO to hire a full-time, local immigration attorney, expand its legal services program, and begin offering direct representation, brief legal advice appointments, and an expanded outreach and education program on immigration legal matters. Alianza NORCO primarily serves non-detained immigrants, assisting with affirmative cases such as family reunification, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status applications, adjustment of status, work authorization, citizenship applications, and DACA renewals.

Alianza NORCO began providing direct representation in Q3 2022, a slight delay from the original projected service start date. This was due to challenges in attracting and hiring an immigration attorney. Alianza NORCO also experienced a brief pause in legal services when their attorney position turned over during the pilot phase of the program. However, throughout the entire pilot phase, Alianza NORCO worked on other components needed to set up their immigration legal services program, such as identifying case management software, training staff and volunteers in the Comprehensive Overview of Immigration Law to obtain Department of Justice accreditation, and streamlining their intake process. In 2022, Alianza NORCO held 37 brief advice consultations and worked with 17 clients. In 2023, the organization represented clients in 65 cases and provided 190 brief advice consultations with trained paralegal staff and immigration attorneys.

ISAAC

The Interfaith Solidarity and Accompaniment Coalition (“ISAAC”) is a broad coalition of faith-based organizations that works in collaboration with other nonprofits and school districts in Larimer County and formed in late 2016. Their mission is: “As interfaith people of conscience, we draw on the teaching of our faiths to work in solidarity for human dignity and immigration justice, co-creating communities of welcome, recognition, healing and accompaniment.”² ISAAC’s Emergency Immigration Fund has been providing crisis funding and legal support to families since 2017, focusing on filling the gaps while advocating for systemic and institutional change.

¹ Alianza NORCO. (n.d.). Alianza NORCO. Accessed from <https://alianzanorco.org/en/>

² About ISAAC — ISAAC NOCO. (n.d.). ISAAC NOCO. Accessed from <https://isaacnoco.org/about-isaac>

Service Delivery

ISAAC offers direct assistance in the form of “scholarships” for legal matters, including immigration cases, that clients pay to their chosen attorney. ISAAC works closely with qualified attorneys to negotiate pro-bono or low-cost rates for their clients’ attorney referral network. ISAAC focuses on immigration cases involving high levels of vulnerability, such as youth (SIJS/DACA), victims of violence and crimes, people with disabilities, the elderly, and emergency cases of deportation or family separation. The majority of ISAAC’s scholarships go to removal defense clients (deportation cases). This scholarship model does not necessarily provide full case funding so many clients pay the balance or access other programmatic resources to close out their cases. The model does allow for flexibility in its awards, paying for filing fees, translation services, or required mental health assessments and biometric scans for immigration cases.

ISAAC's existing Emergency Immigration Fund and program administration allowed for rapid deployment of funds received through the ILF and began providing support to immigrants in Fort Collins. Over the course of the program, ISAAC funded 72 cases, these included 29 asylum cases , visas for victims of crime and domestic violence, and Lawful Permanent Resident (“green card”) cases. In addition to its scholarships, ISAAC began hosting community-based immigration clinics in partnership with other local organizations with ILF funds.

RMIAN

The Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network (“RMIAN”) is a nonprofit organization with over 20 years of experience advancing justice for individuals in civil immigration detention facing removal proceedings. Their mission: “RMIAN is a nonprofit organization that serves low-income men, women, and children in immigration proceedings. RMIAN promotes knowledge of legal rights, provides effective representation to ensure due process, works to improve detention conditions, and promotes a more humane immigration system, including alternatives to detention.”³ RMIAN's target population for ILF includes Fort Collins residents at the Aurora Immigration Detention Center as a priority, followed by representation for children and families from Fort Collins in removal cases.

Service Delivery

As an organization that employs multiple full-time attorneys who are available for direct legal representation, RMIAN benefited from its existing immigration legal work when beginning its services under the ILF. They were able to take on two new clients from Fort Collins in the first quarter of the pilot program. The ILF grant allowed RMIAN to combine those funds for Fort Collins residents with other municipal immigration legal funding to hire an additional attorney for the increased workload. RMIAN's focus on representation throughout the duration of immigration cases allows them to gain a deep understanding of their clients’ circumstances and better shepherd cases through the system.

To date under the ILF, RMIAN has represented clients in 35 cases, out of which 12 cases were resolved and 23 remain active. RMIAN's clients were involved in a variety of case types, such as bond requests, cancellations of removal, asylum applications, employment applications, and more. Because RMIAN is Denver-based and active at the Detention Center in Aurora, they mainly service clients at risk of detention and deportation. In addition to direct legal representation by RMIAN's attorneys, the organization makes referrals to a vetted network of

³ *About Us* — RMIAN. (n.d.). RMIAN. Accessed from <https://www.rmian.org/about-us>

pro-bono attorneys to expand access and continue making progress toward achieving universal representation.

Outputs and Outcomes

To determine the effectiveness of the City of Fort Collins Immigration Legal Fund and improve the program, a mixed-method program assessment was conducted in Q1 2023 to analyze whether the established goals were met, identify progress made, identify barriers and challenges as well as areas for improvement, and ultimately provide a list of recommendations to increase the program's effectiveness and impact in the community. As part of the program evaluation, interviews were conducted with staff from the grant recipient organizations, City staff, and program participants. Administrative data and quarterly grant recipient reports were also analyzed as part of that process.

The program assessment, metrics, and client narratives give an overview of the short-term outcomes of the program. However, the ILF has only existed in Fort Collins since late 2021 and long-term outcomes are difficult to measure within that timeline of the program, particularly because many immigration cases do not resolve quickly. Case resolution alone is also not an adequate metric to determine short-term or long-term outcomes for this program, given that ending one type of immigration process is often a prerequisite for starting or continuing another process.

Aggregate Outputs from All Service Providers (2021-2023)

Overall service providers assisted individuals from 32 countries, Table 2 shows all countries of origins for clients served across all three service providers.

Table 2 – Countries Served by the ILF

Countries Served by the Immigration Legal Fund			
Argentina	El Salvador	Mexico	Serbia
Brazil	Ghana	Nicaragua	Tanzania
Canada	Guatemala	Nigeria	Thailand
Chile	Haiti	Pakistan	Turkey
Colombia	Honduras	Palestine	Uganda
Costa Rica	India	Peru	Ukraine
Cuba	Japan	Poland	United States
Dominican Republic	Libya	Saudi Arabia	Venezuela

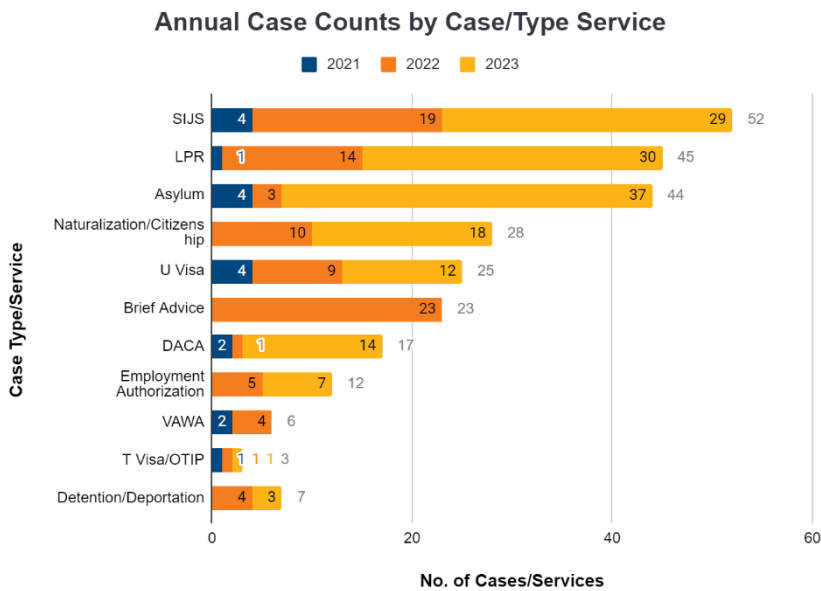
Table 3 presents data on the types of cases or services provided by all grant recipients over a three-year period (2021, 2022, and 2023), along with the grand totals for each case type and the overall total cases handled.

Table 3 – Number of Each Case Type by Year

Case Type/Service	2021	2022	2023	Grand Total
Asylum	4	3	37	44
Brief Advice		23		23
DACA	2	1	14	17
Detention/Deportation	1	3	3	7
Employment Authorization		5	7	12
LPR	1	14	30	45
Naturalization/Citizenship		10	18	28
SIJS	4	19	29	52
T Visa/OTIP	1	1	1	3
U Visa	4	9	12	25
VAWA	2	4		6
Grand Total	19	92	151	262

There was an increase in the total number of cases handled from 19 in 2021 to 92 in 2022, and then to 151 in 2023, indicating a significant growth in service demand and/or capacity over the three years. Asylum cases saw an increase from 3 in 2022 to 37 in 2023, reflecting the impact of removing the 12-month residency requirement. Figure 4 displays the number of cases or services provided annually by all three service providers, from 2021 to 2023.

Figure 4 – Number of Each Case Type by Year



Program Cost/Value Assessment

Attorney costs by case type in the Fort Collins market were obtained from nonprofit immigration service providers operating before the outset of the Immigration Legal Fund and are based on actual attorney and legal staff costs. The amounts listed cover limited filing fees associated with the pro bono representation but do not include bond amounts that can range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 in Colorado.

Table 4 shows the main categories of cases, the number of cases during the ILF Pilot Program, pro bono legal costs per case in the Fort Collins market, and pro bono legal costs without the program. Attorney costs by case type in the Fort Collins market were obtained from nonprofit immigration service providers operating before the outset of the Immigration Legal Fund and are based on actual attorney and legal staff costs. The amounts listed cover limited filing fees associated with the pro bono representation but do not include bond amounts that can range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 in Colorado.

Table 4 – Pro Bono Legal Costs Pilot Phase

Pro Bono Legal Costs and Case Distribution for ILF Pilot Program (2021-2022)

Case Type	No. of Cases during the ILF Pilot Program	Pro Bono Legal Costs Per Case in Fort Collins market	Pro Bono Legal Costs Without Program
Detention/Deportation/Removal Cancellation	4	\$6,000	\$24,000
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)	23	\$4,000	\$92,000
“Affirmative Cases”- DACA, LPR, or Naturalization	28	\$1,000	\$28,000
Asylum	7	\$8,000	\$56,000
Violence Against Women (VAWA), Victims of Crime (U Visa), Victims of Human Trafficking (T Visa/OTIP)	21	\$2,000	\$42,000
Legal Consultation/Brief Advice	23	\$300	\$6,900
TOTAL*			\$248,900
TOTAL ILF PILOT PROGRAM COST**			\$150,000
*Represents the hypothetical scenario where these services would need to be paid for without the support of the program.			
** Refers to the total cost of the ILF Pilot Program from Q4-2021 to Q4-2022			

Table 5 shows the breakdown the number of cases during the ILF Program in 2023 by case type, associated pro bono legal costs in the Fort Collins market and costs without the program.

Table 5 – Pro Bono Legal Costs 2023

Pro Bono Legal Costs and Case Distribution for ILF Program (2023)			
Case Type	No. of Cases during the ILF Program 2023	Pro Bono Legal Costs Per Case in Fort Collins market	Pro Bono Legal Costs Without Program
Detention/Deportation/Removal Cancellation	3	\$6,000	\$18,000
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)	29	\$4,000	\$116,000
"Affirmative Cases"- DACA, LPR, or Naturalization	62	\$1,000	\$62,000
Asylum	37	\$8,000	\$296,000
Violence Against Women (VAWA), Victims of Crime (U Visa), Victims of Human Trafficking (T Visa/OTIP)	13	\$2,000	\$26,000
Legal Consultation/Brief Advice	0	\$300	\$0
TOTAL*			\$518,000
TOTAL ILF PROGRAM COST FOR 2023**			\$250,000
*Represents the hypothetical scenario where these services would need to be paid for without the support of the program.			
** Refers to the total cost of the ILF Program from the year 2023 (\$250,000)			

Outputs by Service Provider

Table 6 summarizes the outputs by service provider from 2021 to 2023, providing an overview of the activities and services delivered in alignment with their respective service delivery model.

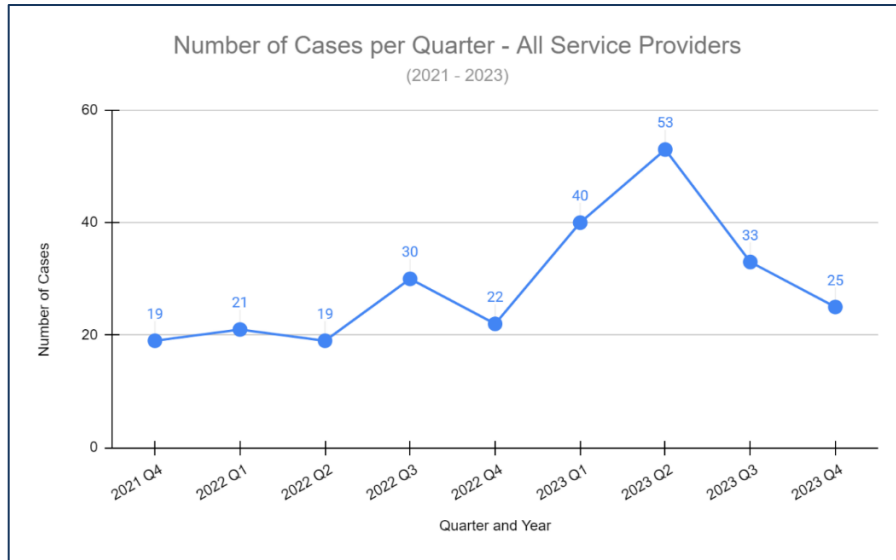
Table 6 – Outputs by Service Provider (2021-2023)

Outputs By Service Provider (2021 - 2023)						
Organization	Number of Cases/EIF Scholarships Granted	No. of Workshops	No. of Clients for Direct Legal Services	No. Brief Advice Meetings	No. Ongoing Cases	No. Closed/Resolved Cases
Alianza NORCO	82	18	309	227	0	0
ISAAC	72	2	0	0	0	0
RMIAN	35	2	35	0	23	12
Grand Total	189	22	344	227	23	12

Figure 5 shows the number of cases handled by all three service providers over the period Q1 2021 to Q4 2023. It is important to note that Alianza NORCO had its first clients in Q3 2022 because it did not have existing legal services prior to this program and needed the time to ramp up for service delivery. ISAAC exhausted program funds and had no ILF-funded cases in Q3 2022,

Q4 2022, or Q4 2023.

Figure 5 – Cases per Quarter (2021-2023)



Figures 6-8 illustrate the number of cases or services managed by each grant recipient organization across case and service categories over consecutive quarters. ISAAC's chart, covering 2021 Q4 to 2023 Q3, highlights peaks in Asylum cases in 2022 Q2 and consistent activity in the SIJS category. Alianza NORCO's data from 2022 Q3 to 2023 Q4 shows a surge in Naturalization/Citizenship services in 2023 Q1 and a high volume of Brief Advice cases in 2022 Q4. RMIAN's chart, spanning 2021 Q4 to 2023 Q4, indicates an uptick in Employment Authorization cases in 2023 Q1 and a notable number of T Visa/OTIP cases in 2023 Q2.

Figure 6 – Cases per Quarter – Alianza NORCO (2021-2023)

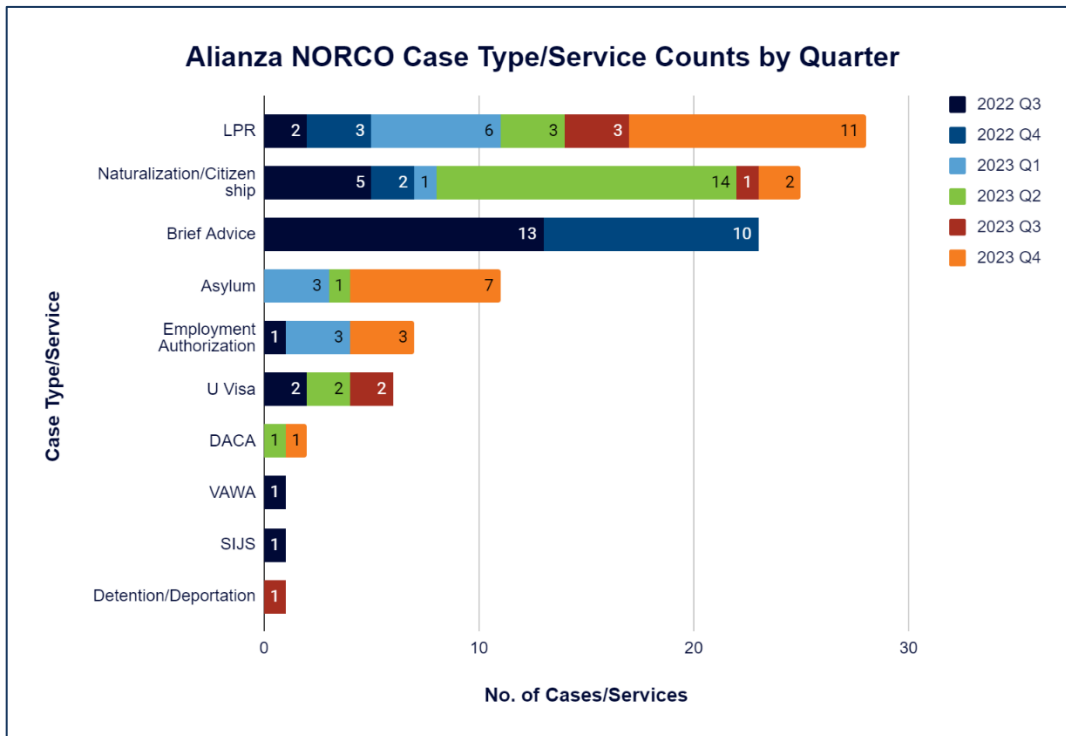


Figure 7 – Cases per Quarter – ISAAC (2021-2023)

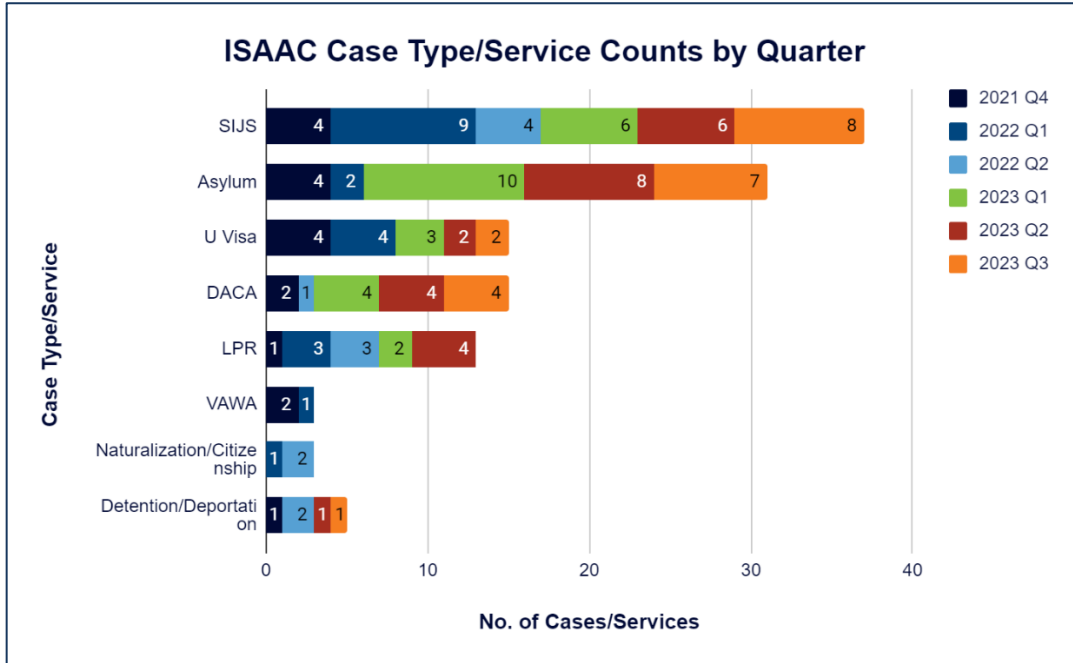
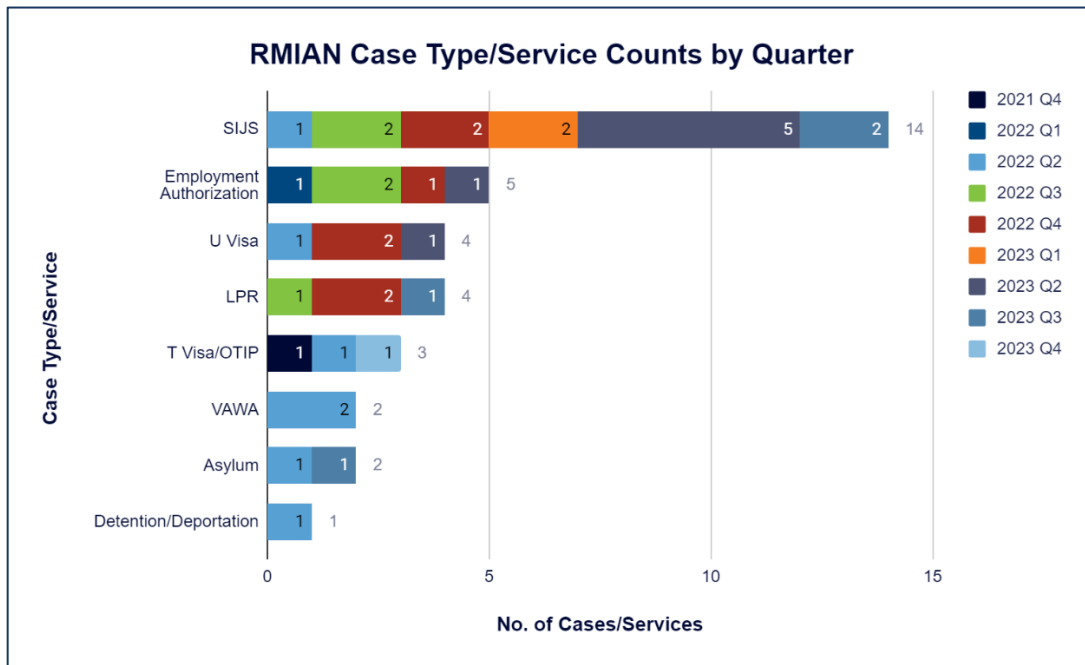


Figure 8 – Cases per Quarter – Alianza NORCO (2021-2023)



Outcomes

Outcomes are the direct results of the program's activities. ILF Outcomes noted during the program assessment include:

- Enhanced Access to Legal Services:
 - Broadened Reach: Legal services made accessible to those previously unable to afford them.
 - Quality of Representation: Access to higher-quality legal representation provided.
- Economic Contributions and Workforce Integration:
 - Work Authorization: Assistance provided in obtaining work authorization.
- Leveraging Community Resources:
 - Partnership Opportunities: Creation of partnerships among stakeholders.
 - Volunteer Engagement: Mobilization of volunteers to support legal assistance efforts.

Pilot Phase Recommendations

Although the pilot phase of the Immigration Legal Fund outperformed projected case numbers and received positive feedback from program participants and grant recipients, there were several opportunities for improvement identified to increase the ILF's impact in the community.

The cadence of the City's budget processes limited the ability to implement some recommended changes to the program between the pilot phase and continuation of the ILF in 2023. Comparative results between outcomes in 2023 and 2024 may better demonstrate the actual impact of the pilot phase recommendations since program updates could be made prior to 2024 implementation.

1. **Remove 12-month Residency Requirement** – A major limitation expressed by all grant recipients was the 12-month residency requirement, as it prevented service providers from using grant funding to help individuals who, due to their immigration case specifics, have not established residency in Fort Collins for 12 months or longer. This effectively restricted individuals like asylum seekers and refugees from obtaining much needed support, as they are fleeing precarious situations in their home countries, and must file applications for status within their first 12 months of arrival. *This limitation was removed for the 2023 continuation of the ILF and resulted in 87% increase in asylum cases that year.*
2. **Standardize Reporting** - During the pilot program, grant recipients provided individual quarterly reports in slightly different formats. For example, in the interest of client anonymity, some reports provide aggregate demographic data rather than detailing data associated with an individual and their case type or outcome. Standardizing reporting practices will reduce the time spent by grant recipients completing their respective reports and capture more consistent demographic and case-specific data, allowing for a more robust and thorough assessment and increase the likelihood that trends surface. *Quarterly reporting templates are being provided to grant recipients for 2024 and a collaboration/training workshop is currently scheduled to cover the updated reporting process.*
3. **Collaboration is key** - Grant recipients would benefit from continued collaboration with one another, the City of Fort Collins, and other governmental organizations like Larimer County. Government entities can leverage their substantial resources to disseminate promotional information, and to sponsor or organize more community events tied to additional programmatic goals.
4. **Continue seeking diverse funding sources** – As two of the grant recipients under ILF are relatively new organizations, they and the program would continue to benefit from exploring additional, diverse funding streams and partnerships that could enhance wraparound immigration legal services. Divergent service delivery models led to one service provider exhausting ILF grant funds prior to the end of the funding cycle each time because their funds go directly to clients as scholarships. This makes monthly expenditures unpredictable since they depend on the case types and number of clients applying for services each month and are not set costs. An assessment at the end of 2024 program delivery should include analysis of whether equal distribution of the ILF funds is effective, given the diversity of the delivery models.
5. **Provide more training for volunteer attorneys** - Training volunteer attorneys could drastically expand local capacity and take some pressure off ISAAC and Alianza NORCO. Not to mention that if the volunteer attorney trainings are then followed by legal clinics, immigration matters that are less complex like completing a naturalization form could be handled at a larger scale, once again, freeing up attorneys' capacity to concentrate on the more complicated and lengthy cases.

Impacts

- Over the three years of the Immigration Legal Fund, Neighborhood Services staff observed indicators of increased trust from community members through public participation. Undocumented residents are contributing public comments to City Council frequently on a range of issues including minimum wage and occupancy. These residents are also organizing and attending community meetings, openly identifying themselves as undocumented.
- During the program assessment and in client evaluations, undocumented community members expressed that they feel safer participating in public processes because of efforts by the City to address their needs. These clients were also more likely to refer others to the Immigration Legal Fund. Additional client evaluation data will be available at the end of 2024 as cases resolve.

Future Considerations

- **Local Legal Representation:** The only private immigration attorney in Fort Collins is no longer handling deportation cases except those of unaccompanied minors, widening the gap in available local services. This change leaves the Immigration Legal Fund as the only local option for representation in most detention and deportation cases.
- **Adapting to Federal Policy Changes:** Immigration policy changes at the Federal level require constant monitoring and adaptation for the ILF. For example, pending federal immigration legislation could change the ability to assist with asylum cases. Adaptation of educational materials to reflect changes in legislation will continue to impact the budget for the program and its grant recipients. A federal decision regarding Temporary Protected Status allowing work authorization for some Venezuelan newcomers in 2022 was unanticipated at the outset of this program. This has led to a greater need for legal support that would authorize employment and navigation services to connect workers and employers.
- **Budget Next Steps:** The Immigration Legal Fund has approved funding through December 2024 and has contracts in place with grant recipients to continue their services until that time. A Budgeting for Outcomes offer will be submitted to propose to the City Manager and City Council continuation of this program.

Appendix A – Immigration Legal Fund Background

As of 2021, the immigrant community represented approximately 7.3% of the Fort Collins population. This local immigrant community is comprised of people born in another country who now call the United States home and within this community, 58.7% are naturalized U.S. citizens while 41.3% are not. Out of this 41.3% who are not currently U.S. citizens, approximately 2,200 are eligible for naturalization and 2,300 are estimated to be undocumented and at risk for deportation. Those eligible for naturalization are lawful permanent residents (“LPR”) who, due to various obstacles such as complex processes, high fees, rapidly changing policies and federal legislation, and/or lack of awareness about potential pathways to citizenship, have yet to begin the naturalization process or have had to pause it. Among those currently considered ineligible for naturalization are non-immigrant visa holders, undocumented migrants, and temporary residents. However, many immigrants ineligible for naturalization have other pathways to lawful presence in the U.S. One of the biggest challenges noted by ILF service providers is that both immigrants eligible for naturalization and those eligible for various statuses that would allow for lawful presence face layers of complexity in existing processes during their immigration journey. Immigrants often move through different status designations after arrival in the U.S., each with a separate process that incurs additional fees and may require the expertise of an immigration attorney to navigate. Prior to implementation of the ILF in Fort Collins, there was no concerted outreach program to inform immigrants of available relief or to educate about immigration processes. The Immigrant and Refugee Center in Greeley was the nearest source for formal, regular education programming but the lack of transportation options prevented most Fort Collins residents from accessing those resources, some of which are also limited to participation by residents of Greeley or Weld County only.

Economic Disparity

In Fort Collins, immigrants without U.S. citizenship, including those lacking lawful presence, experience significant social vulnerability across various socioeconomic indicators. These include higher poverty rates, with 22.2% living below 100% of the poverty line compared to 15.4% of native-born individuals. Additionally, they face higher levels of family poverty (14.7% versus 4.5% for native-born individuals) and increased poverty among households headed by single females (32.5% compared to 17.5%). Economic disparities can cause various problems such as limited access to education, poor health outcomes, food insecurity, unstable housing, and fewer job opportunities. These issues often overlap and exacerbate each other. These economic disparities tend to be intergenerational, increasing the likelihood of creating a poverty trap and perpetuating the cycle of poverty for individuals and families, from which it is difficult to escape.

Legal Representation

Like the criminal justice system, immigration courts allow for detention of those accused of wrongdoing under their area of law. Criminal court cases are heard under the federal Judicial Branch where defendants have the right to an attorney even if they cannot afford one. Immigration court, overseen by an Executive Branch Administrative Agency, does not require representation by an attorney and does not provide access to immigration attorneys regardless of age or income of the individual in immigration proceedings. This sometimes leads to cases where even young children are representing themselves in immigration court proceedings without an adult, guardian, or attorney present. Fort Collins also has a greater need for representation in cases for clients of all ages than available private immigration attorneys to represent clients who can afford the services. When the ILF began in 2021, only one full-time immigration attorney was

practicing in the city and had a private practice, making legal representation unattainable for every community member in need.

Immigration Legal Fund Pilot Program

To address the unmet need of legal representation in immigration cases and educational programming to raise awareness of available options to attain citizenship or lawful presence, the Immigration Legal Fund pilot program was established by the City of Fort Collins. Its goals are to help families stay together, keep the community safe, and improve access to City services for all community members regardless of documentation status by removing barriers to full participation in the community and public processes. The ILF was approved for an 18-month pilot program to grant funds to nonprofit organizations and legal service providers to offer holistic immigration legal services for Fort Collins residents.

Pilot program participation required a 12-month residency in Fort Collins prior to application to the program. This eligibility requirement was implemented to address concerns about incentivizing further migration to the city. The residency requirement was ultimately removed after the pilot phase of the program, as it proved to be an obstacle that prevented asylum seekers; a high priority subset of immigrants fleeing torture, threat of death, and other persecution in their home countries; from receiving assistance. This is because asylum seekers must file an application for status within their first 12 months of arriving in the U.S. so the pilot program's residency requirement made almost all asylum cases ineligible for the ILF.